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The Army After Next

An interview with Army Chief of Staff GEN Dennis J. Reimer '62 BY TOM CARHART '66

Tom Carhart: There are a number of projects going on in the Army that I'd like to ask you about. The first one is the Advanced Warfighting Experiment that took place last spring at Ft. Irwin. Why are these exercises important for the future of Army?

GEN REIMER: I think the Advanced Warfighting Experiments (AWE) represent the change that has taken place in the United States Army. What we're trying to do is to change the Army from a Cold War Army into a post–Cold War Army—moving it from the industrial age to the information age—from a threat-based force to a capabilities-based force. That is hard to do, and what we have done is execute a series of what we call "warfighting experiments." The AWE process was really started by my predecessor, GEN Gordon Sullivan. It's a path we've been on for some time, and it's a good one.

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The one you refer to was the brigade Advanced Warfighting Experiment involving the 4th Infantry Division. During that AWE, we took the legacy systems we have in the Army today—the [Abrams] tanks, the Bradleys, the howitzers—the standard equipment for one of our heavy brigades—and put information-age technology on those systems to see if we could make a substantial difference in the way we conduct business. Basically, that's what the AWE was all about; and a lot of great things came out of that. It really is the heart of our change process. First of all, we formed a task force at Ft. Hood in partnership with industry. Then we brought our testers, our developers, and our users together and said, "Here's what we're trying to do. We're in this together, we're joined at the hip. We need to try to make this work." And so what you got was a synergy in the development process. For example, industry would hand us certain equipment and say, "Use that." The troops would go out in the field and use it for a week, come back on a Friday and say, "Gosh, it would be nice if you could fix this or make this do that." Over the weekend, industry would crank it out—get some new software or whatever it took. So, through that process, we were able to save weeks, months—and that's critical because time is money in the acquisition business.

That [AWE] is a great system, and we will continue to try to leverage it and use it as we continue to field new equipment into the 21st Century. We're gearing up to do that now.

The second thing we wanted to do was answer three basic questions: "Where am I? Where are my buddies? Where is the enemy?" We said if we can do that, then we can change the way we do business. We were not 100 percent successful in all areas. I would say we were probably about 80 or 90 percent successful. What we found is that, as soldiers in the field saw the tremendous potential in the situational awareness and situational understanding, they became more comfortable with it.

It's hard to quantify, but I can tell you when Secretary [of Defense] Cohen came out to the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin to observe the AWE, we took him into one of the Tactical Operations Centers and had the 4th Infantry Division's G-3 brief him.

The G-3 said, "Mr. Secretary, before we had this increased situational awareness, I spent about 70 percent of my time gathering information and 30 percent trying to analyze that information and make decisions. With this new situational awareness, I'm now able to spend about 30 percent of my time gathering that information and 70 percent analyzing it." To me, that is compelling, and it says it's worth going after. I just think there is tremendous potential there.

Now what we have to do is to make sure we get the leader development program in sync with the technology we've unveiled in the AWEs. We've got to make sure we get our training systems in sync, and we've got to make sure we get our doctrine in sync.

The AWE was all about change. It's how we're changing the Army to ensure we remain relevant to the needs of the nation in the 21st Century, just as the Army has always been for 222 years. It's an exciting thing, quite frankly.

Carhart: The next issue is the Army After Next. [MG] Bob Scales '66 obviously played a significant role in this. What do you see coming down the road from the AAN effort?

REIMER: I have been a big supporter of the Army After Next from the start as a continuation of the change process. When I came back to Washington to serve as chief of staff, I said, "Let's project out to 2020 and look at what we've got there; see what the requirements are for the military and for the Army in particular. Here we are in 1997, so we needed to ask, 'How do we get there from here—how do we connect the dots from 1997 to 2020?'"

The whole process of going from 1997 to 2020 is called Force XXI. Army XXI—a specific force—is really designed to leverage the information-age technology I talked about earlier and then achieve the six imperatives—*quality people, realistic training, doctrine, leadership development,* the *right force mix,* and *modern equipment.* Those six imperatives—keeping those all in sync—is what this full change process is all about.

The Army After Next is really our vision of what the Army should look like after Army XXI out to around 2020. That's a totally different Army from what we have today, as far as I'm concerned.

I can't tell you the specific systems it will have, but I can tell you a number of things that it will require. First of all, it will require an Army that is much more strategically and operationally mobile and agile. We're going to have to be able to move ground capabilities anywhere around the globe in a short period of time. It's going to require an Army that is versatile enough to shift quickly between lethal and non-lethal means; to be able to fight in urban terrain, as well as in the desert. It's going to require an Army that is logistically unencumbered. We cannot re-supply or support an Army the same way we did during WWII or during the last few years. It's going to have a transportation-based logistical system as opposed to a supply-based system. It's going to have even greater integration of the active component and reserve components. So all of these things are fundamental changes we have to make, and the Force XXI process will help us do that.

What we're looking to do with the Army After Next is drive our investment program—our research and development—and bring along the technology that we think we will need in the 2020 timeframe. Then, through the Force XXI process and by keeping the six imperatives in balance, we'll be able to bring those together and have a true revolution in military affairs.

As I look back on history, I believe the thing that has made the Army strong is the balance of those six imperatives. So we're taking those six imperatives and projecting them out to 2020. This is an exciting process. The Army After Next has really been a great effort, and it's very complementary with the Advanced War Fighting Experiments. To put it another way, the Advanced Warfighting Experiments are a part of our movement toward the Army After Next.

Carhart: My view of the Army After Next is: "We can't be sure of what's out there, but in planning for the future, we help make the future." The Army is not sitting back waiting, it's being proactive. That has to be good for the Army.

REIMER: I think you're absolutely right, and I think that is a very important point to make. When I visit other countries, a lot of them are watching very closely what we're trying to do. Some of them are trying to do the same type of things; others are saying, "We're going to let you lead" or "We're concerned about the gap that may exist between us." But *we* are driving that change, and I think that's a terribly important point to make.

Carhart: My next issue is division redesign. There's been a lot of talk about [Army COL] Doug Macgregor's book *Breaking the Phalanx*, going back to the regiment, regimental combat teams and so on, smaller armies, smaller units. Do you anticipate this coming, or is this just one of many options?

REIMER: First of all, Doug Macgregor wrote a great book, and it's very thought-provoking. I've asked the Army's general officers to read it because I think it's part of professional development. Quite frankly, I think it has increased the professional discussion among Army officers. I don't know whether Doug's got it one-hundred percent right; my guess is he probably doesn't. I don't think even he would say he has it one-hundred percent right. But I think he has certainly put a mark on the wall for us to look at and to either say yes we support it, or there's a better way of doing business. And if we do that as professionals, we will come up with a better product.

My feeling is Macgregor's concept is somewhere between Army XXI and the Army After Next. Where it is, I don't know. To determine that, we have to work the experimentation process.

I think the Army After Next will feature much smaller, more mobile units. As I said, it has to be more agile, and I think that means smaller units, streamlined headquarters and fewer of them. As far as what we're doing now with the division redesign, we're taking a look at how we might redesign the division based upon what we learned from the March [1997] AWE, and we built upon the experimentation process with a Division AWE that took place at Ft. Hood in November 1997.

I think we'll gradually move closer to Macgregor's organization. I like a lot of the concepts he wrote about; I think they make sense. On the other hand, when you start tinkering with something that's been as good as the division has been for the United States Army, you've got to know what you're doing.

I think the best way to do that is through the experimentation process to make sure we've got it right. I think we have the opportunity to do that right now.

Carhart: What did [Operation] Desert Storm do for you and the Army?

REIMER: I'd say the Gulf War revalidated the course we're on and highlighted the importance of the six imperatives. It really reinforced in my mind why those six imperatives are so critical to the Army. For me, personally, it put an end to the Vietnam chapter. It was always difficult for me to understand why people would tell you when you came back to the United States after Vietnam, that you had to get out of uniform to travel.

When I watched the victory parade in June 1991 here in Washington, and then the next day I drove down to Old Town Alexandria and saw two Marines going to church in their uniform, I said, "This is closure for me," and I really believe that it was. Desert Storm also demonstrated the Army was back, the Army was where it needed to be. Now our job is to lead it to where it needs to be in 2020.

Carhart: The next topic I'd like to discuss is the Quadrennial Defense Review or QDR. How did the Army fare? How do you think the Army will fare with the independent National Defense Panel?

REIMER: First of all, I think the QDR was something we needed very badly. This is our third attempt to redefine and reshape the national defense strategy since the end of the Cold War, and to some extent I participated in each of those attempts at various levels. This attempt was a very thorough one, from the perspective of taking a look at the type of operations in which we might be involved. I think it helped tell a story, which I think is compelling, about the need for boots on the ground.

I think all of the Joint Chiefs came away with the feeling that the strategy we had developed through the different analytical games we've run—particularly one called "Dynamic Commitment"—was about right. The strategy was based on three pillars. One was to be able to *"respond"* to crises wherever they may occur.

Second was to be able to *"shape"* the environment we will live in, the world of the 21st Century. I often talk and discuss that in terms of making the world safer for our children and grandchildren and about what a tremendous opportunity that is. If we're successful, which I hope and believe we will be, what a great gift that is to give to humanity. The third was to *"prepare"* the military force for the environment they will face in the 2020 time frame.

To me, those three pillars are very solid

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and reflect the major issues the U.S. military faces. So, from my standpoint, the QDR was very good. I think the QDR allowed the Army to tell our story and certainly make the point that we will contribute in terms of responding in a crisis and other ways.

If you look at the military operations that have taken place since the end of the Cold War, you find there have been about 27 operations. The Army has provided the majority of the forces for those operations, and so we have responded to crises whenever they occur.

When you talk about shaping the force, or shaping the world, you're talking about programs like Partnership for Peace (PFP), NATO expansion, and military-to-military contacts. And when you talk military-to-military, given the predominance of the armies in all the other countries, you're primarily talking Army-to-Army contact. So we had a point to make and we had the opportunity to make our point. Before the QDR, conventional wisdom was, "Why do we need these muddy-boot soldiers when we can have high technology airplanes or other high technology equipment?" Clearly, you need the soldiers to help shape the environment. Wars are fought by humans, and as long as people live on the earth, we're going to need land forces to do it.

Author T. R. Fehrenbach had it right in his book *This Kind of War*, ". . .You may bomb a nation into the stone age, but if you want to defend it, protect it and keep it for civilization, you've got to do it like the Roman Legions did by putting your soldiers in the mud . . ." That's basically what we have done.

So I think the QDR was good from our standpoint. Of course, we hate to lose any soldiers, and cuts always come hard. Any time you have to say good-bye to good soldiers, it's always difficult. But, on the other hand, we also have to prepare for the future. As we've reshaped the force, we've taken our modernization account—our future—and kind of mortgaged it to take care of people. That was the right thing to do at the time. I wouldn't do it any differently, because we put people first. But now, as we get into reshaping for the 21st Century and preparing for the 21st Century, we have to downsize more in order to modernize.

Forty-five thousand is a little bit more than a few people, but it's what we had to do in order to balance the equation and get those modernization and personnel disparities back in line again. Our goal is to make sure that we take care of the people that are leaving and the people that are staying in the Army. The QDR was one step. The National Defense Panel has done an analysis of what we've done with the QDR, and ultimately we'll have to go to Congress. Congress will either approve or disapprove the recommendations that have been made. So this is a continuous thing, but I think it's been a really good effort, and the Army has made its case very well.

As I've told everybody, the Army's case was made not necessarily by the people here in the Pentagon. Yes, they did a great job, but the case was made by the soldiers out there in the field who were protecting the Bosnians, maintaining their readiness in Korea, and training at the National Training Center. They gave validity to the story.

Carhart: How does the new Officer Professional Management System, OPMS XXI, fit in to the overall picture? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

REIMER: Basically, I told [MG] Dave Ohle, who ran our OPMS task force for about a year, back in the summer of 1996, that we've got to take a look at the officer personnel management system and figure out what we need to do to develop the leaders we're going to need in the 21st Century. What I'm talking about is the human dimension of the change the Army has undergone. The Advanced Warfighting Experiment really deals with the physical side of it; OPMS XXI gets into the cultural change that we have to make.

What I told Dave initially was, "First of all, we've got to keep warfighting as our number one priority." That's the reason you have an Army—to win the nation's wars—and I don't want to do anything to degrade the importance we place on warfighting. On the other hand, we've got to have people who can help shape the environment and prepare for the future—and those aren't always developed solely through "warfighting" assignments.

Warfighters are terribly important, and they play a critical role. However, there are also Civil Affairs officers, Foreign Area Officers, Acquisition Corps officers, and others with unique skills who are very important.

So, we've got to develop a group of people who meet the requirements of the Army in terms of certain specialties. We intend to keep warfighting preeminent but also develop the other requirements of the Army in the 21st Century.

The intent behind OPMS XXI is to develop a personnel management system that allows us to do that. What Dave has done, and he's done a very good job that I've oversimplified, is divide our officers into four different career fields.

One is the *operational* field, which most people will look at as the way we do business today—the MTOE or operational tactical Army.

A second field is *information operations*. As we move into the information age, information operations will become very criti-

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cal. We need to develop more expertise in that area, and we're doing just that.

The next field is *operational support*, an area that has to be further developed. It will strengthen current readiness while preparing for the future force through its liaison, procurement, programming, and development specialties.

The fourth field is *installation support*, which will focus on the ever more technical and evolved nature of running the Army as an organization. The emphasis in this career field is management, planning, and programming of Army resources.

These are the four areas we will concentrate on in developing our officers in order to meet the requirements of the 21st Century. OPMS XXI has been a superb effort. I think it will move the Army into the leadership development programs that we need to ensure the officers we have in the 21st Century will be officers that have the right training.

OPMS XXI has been a great effort by Dave Ohle and the group of 20 or 30 people on his task force. We've gotten great input from just about everybody concerned, and I couldn't be prouder of the product they've developed. The issue now is to get the field to understand it, execute it, and implement it. That's what we're doing now.

Carhart: On a lighter note, you use the phrase "Soldiers are our Credentials" quite often. Where did it come from? What does it mean to you?

REIMER: It's derived from the motto of the 8th Infantry Division. It comes from a story in WW II—a true story. The Assistant Division Commander, a man by the name of BG [Charles] Canham, was about to receive the surrender of a German unit. Canham went over to this bunker where the German commander was located; accompanying him were a couple of infantry soldiers. He said, "I'm here to receive your surrender."

The German commander [a three-star general] said, "I won't surrender until I see your credentials." BG Canham turned to the two American soldiers and said, "These are my credentials." I use that for two reasons. One, the 8th Division is no longer in the active inventory anymore, so it represents the downsizing. It is important we keep in mind the great tradition and history of those units that are no longer part of the active component.

Second, it's very true—soldiers are our credentials. We have high-quality soldiers, and they don't ask for much. They just want to be well led, they want to be given important missions, and they'll do a great job. So they are our nation's credentials. Every time they get the chance, they make us proud.

Carhart: It has been more than 35 years since you graduated from West Point. What has West Point meant to you? Do you still get excited about Army–Navy football?

REIMER: Well, let me just say when I was there, during my four years at West Point, we lost three times. Since I've been Chief of Staff, we're 2–0. I think we're on a roll, and I hope we stay on that roll. I like it much better this way—when we win. But in all seriousness, I used to always think about what GEN MacArthur meant when he said, "Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that upon other fields on other days, will bear the fruits of victory."

When I watched the Army–Navy game two years ago, and even this past year, when we were down and had no right to think we were going to win and then we came back to win, I knew what MacArthur meant. He was talking about a spirit that couldn't be beat—one that wouldn't accept defeat. It's the same spirit we saw in the survivors of the Bataan Death March and the same spirit I saw exhibited by the last two West Point football teams, that's where that comes from and that's why it's so important.

As I get near the end of this great journey in the Army, I go back to some of the things that I first heard at West Point. I know Schofield's definition of discipline means much more to me in 1997 than it did in 1962. I understand, after 35 years in the Army, why they emphasized those things. It's more than just learning it, it is practice. When times are tough, you default to those things you know best.

During MacArthur's speech in Washington Hall in May 1962, he talked about, ". . . Yours is the profession of arms—the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory; that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed.' Those things have proved true, and they mean a great deal to me. The things that we do at West Point—whether it is beating Navy in football or learning Schofield's definition of discipline—are tremendously important.

Interviewer's biography:
Tom Carhart '66 was mentioned prominently in Rick Atkinson's book, *The Long Gray Line*, and served as an Infantry officer with the 82d Airborne at Ft. Bragg and in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne, receiving two Purple Hearts. He has a Juris Doctor from Michigan and recently received a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. Carhart worked for years as a government attorney and, later, as a historian at the Army's Center of Military History. He is the author of four books on the military, including *Iron Soldiers*, about the 1st Armored Division in the Gulf War.